
DATA QUALITY AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY, DATA QUALITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report proposes a revision to the Council's existing Records Management Policy to explicitly state the need to assure data quality and introduces a proposed Data Quality Strategy and Data Quality Action Plan for Members' consideration and approval.
- 1.2 The Council's current Records Management Policy was approved in January 2004 by the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, with the introduction of the new decision making structure and the extension of the policy to include data quality and accuracy, it is now seen to be within the remit of the Audit Committee.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Data quality has historically been assured by periodic audit checks by both the Council's Internal Audit Team and our External Auditors. In essence, this has entailed checking of data and calculations after they have been reported.
- 2.2 From 2005/6 a revised approach to the external audit of data was introduced by the Audit Commission, which consisted of an overall assessment of the arrangements the Council had in place to assure data quality, a check of any Performance Indicators which had exhibited significant variances from previous years, and an in depth review of a sample of Performance Indicators to verify the process for their compilation and accuracy.
- 2.3 The overall Data Quality assessment was scored by reference to Key Lines of Enquiry (KloE) covering the following areas in respect of Data Quality:-
- Governance and leadership
 - Policies
 - Systems and processes
 - People and skills
 - Use of data
- 2.4 Possible outcomes from the assessment were:-
- Level 1 – Below minimum requirements - Inadequate performance
 - Level 2 – Meeting minimum requirements - Adequate performance

- Level 3 – Above minimum requirements - Performing well
 - Level 4 – Well above minimum requirements - Performing strongly
- 2.5 For 2005/06, the External Auditors found that Rochford District Council, in common with most other Councils, had achieved level 2 – adequate performance, for its data quality arrangements up to 31 March 2006.
- 2.6 The proposed revision of our Records Management Policy, and the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan have been developed by reference to the KloE to address those areas where improvements are necessary to assure the quality of the Council’s data and to maintain and improve our scores in future Data Quality Assessments.
- 2.7 Members have the option to view the full Data Quality Report from the External Auditors if they wish.

3 THE DATA QUALITY AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

- 3.1 The proposed Data Quality and Records Management Policy has been developed from our existing Records Management Policy by the addition of a new Section 5 entitled Data Quality, which recognises the importance of the accuracy and quality of the data used by the Council, states our objectives in respect of Data Quality and refers to the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan as the means by which improved data quality will be achieved.
- 3.2 The underlying philosophy of the Data Quality Policy and Strategy is to minimise the bureaucracy attached to Data Quality whilst maximising its effectiveness.
- 3.3 The proposed Data Quality and Records Management Policy is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

4 THE DATA QUALITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 The Data Quality Strategy has been developed to assist in improving the Council's performance in data collection, handling, storage, retrieval, use of information and communication. The document sets out how the Council will maintain and improve its ability to ensure that the data it uses to demonstrate its performance is of the highest quality consistent with the efficient and effective use of its resources.
- 4.2 Our vision for data quality is that we get things right first time, that is, we will have the right information at the right time at the right cost. We will thus aim to improve our overall Data Quality score to at least “Level 3- Consistently above minimum requirements – performing well” by April 2008.
- 4.3 The detailed actions required to achieve the improvement in our data quality arrangements are laid out in the Data Quality Action Plan with reference to the relevant KloE.

- 4.4 The officer with overall responsibility for this strategy is the Corporate Director (Internal Services).
- 4.5 The Audit and Process Review Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the audits of Data Quality are undertaken and for reporting progress to the Audit Committee.
- 4.6 The proposed Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan are included as Appendices 2 and 3 to this report.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Accuracy of data is fundamental to sound decision making and the formulation of policy. Failure to assure our data quality could therefore have significant impact on the Council's ability to correctly define its policies and strategies or deliver against its objectives.
- 5.2 The implementation of the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan will minimise data quality errors and thus mitigate any potential strategic, operational, reputational or regulatory consequences.
- 5.3 Failure to implement a Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan will mean that the Council's overall score in future Data Quality assessments will be at risk.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Data Quality and Records Management Policy and the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan assist the Council in meeting its obligations under the Data Protection Acts 1984 and 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the revised Data Quality and Records Management Policy be approved.
 - (2) That the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan be approved.
 - (3) To agree that Data Quality progress reports be considered by the Audit Committee in September and December 2007.

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Background Papers: -

None

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